Strategy Research Project

Marine Corps Values-Based Ethics Training: A Recipe to Reduce Misconduct

by

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United States Marine Corps

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Abstract

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The ethics of the military forces of the United States, including the Marine Corps, have degraded in the past decade due to ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as other global commitments. This degradation is reflected in abuses in combat as well as sexual assault, suicide and other misconduct. In 2012, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos, was so disturbed by this trend that he ordered a Marine Corps wide stand-down to address ethics. Marine officers largely receive values-based ethics training that attempts to refine their character. Enlisted Marines receive rules-based ethics training which emphasizes conduct, not character. Leaders must be aware of the difficulties raised when attempting to change culture in any organization, especially one in which there exists tensions between underlying cultural assumptions and societal norms.

Marine Corps Values-Based Ethics Training: A Recipe to Reduce Misconduct

The ethical fabric of the military forces of the United States, including the United States Marine Corps, has degraded in the past decade due to the ongoing conflict in Iraq, Afghanistan and other global commitments. This degradation is reflected not only in abuses in the theaters of combat, but also in garrison resulting in a high rate of sexual assault, skyrocketing rates of suicide, and high-profile cases of other misconduct including infidelity.[1] While it is difficult to measure the ethical health of the Marine Corps, a prudent assumption based on the above incidents is that the ethical health of the force is in decline, and that insufficient evidence exists to indicate there is no decline present. In fact, in 2012 the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos, was so disturbed by the declining ethical trend of the Marine Corps that he ordered a force-wide stand-down to address the issue.[2] The Commandant personally briefed all Officers and senior enlisted Marines on the trend and measures to correct it.[3]

Ethical fraying after long periods of strife is not a new phenomenon; from the time of the ancient Greeks, it has been understood that in a long-lasting conflict, with its ebbs and flows of victory and defeat, the ethical fabric of a military force may degrade or unravel altogether.[4] The better question, then, is how to combat this ethical decline? This paper discusses the meaning of ethics in the military, describes the ethical decline in the United States Marine Corps, and examines how to arrest and reverse this decline. The distinction between “rules-based” and “values-based” ethics is explored, and that distinction examined in light of the different technique by which Marine officers and enlisted are taught military ethics. Current trends leading to institutional ethical tension within the Marine Corps, and the clash of those trends with the disciplinary cornerstone

of individual accountability are also examined. Finally, specific changes to the ethical education of the enlisted population, as well as techniques to permanently affect the culture of the Marine Corps, are recommended.

Ethics Defined

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines ethics as, “The field [which]…involves systemizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior.”[5] There is often confusion between the terms ethics, morals, ethos and character due to a lack of agreed upon definitions of each. Paul Robinson, director at the Institute of Applied Ethics at the University of Hull notes, “The consequence of this semantic confusion is the occasional elision and overlap of terms such as ‘ethics,’ ‘morality,’ ‘ethos,’ and ‘character’…the fact that there is no firm agreement in definition means that this is avoidable.”[6] Study of material presented at the United States Naval Academy (USNA), The Basic School (TBS), and recruit training shows there is general agreement that “morals” and “character” often refer to individuals, while “ethics” often refers to organizations and “ethos” to martial organizations.[7] In internet training targeted at officers, the Marine Corps defines ethics as, “The rules or standards of conduct for members of a profession.”[8] In light of this, and to provide continuity throughout this paper, the term of “ethics” will be used throughout to designate the organizational behavior and temperament of the United States Marine Corps, and “morals” to designate the behavior and temperament of individual Marines.

The term “military ethic” is also ill-defined though widely used. James Toner, professor of military ethics and international relations at the U.S. Air War College, while noting the moral confusion prevalent in society writes, “…The armed forces do have a standard (the traditional military ethic), the virtues of which can provide an ethical

reference point for soldiers so that they can chart a course for doing the right thing. The core values – the main virtues – of the armed forces are wisdom, justice, courage and temperance, which are found both in Sacred scripture and in the writing of the ancient Greeks."[9] There exists a common vision across most training for U.S. forces on the components of the "military ethic" including justice, courage, honor and commitment, but often these are referred to by other names. At TBS, these are called an "institutional ethic" while at USNA (Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership) and United States Military Academy (Simon Center for Professional Military Ethic) they are referred to as a "military ethic." Training materials for recruits refer to this as the "Marine Corps Ethical Policy" and commonly refer to the United States Marine Corps core values of honor, courage and commitment.[10]

Militaries around the globe employ two primary modes of ethics training.[11] The first method, commonly referred to as "rules-based"[12] training provides an ethical framework for military actions in accordance with conventions, laws and rules of engagement. This training strives to, "…produce military personnel who will strive not to give or obey illegal… orders, and to follow the rules and regulations governing the conduct of war as well as those governing the organizational aspects of military life."[13] It is important to understand that the goal of "rules-based" training, "…is not to improve the moral character of military personnel *per se*, but to teach them how to behave correctly when carrying out their professional duties. What matters most…is correct behavior."[14] As will be demonstrated throughout this paper, most ethics training, and reinforcement of that training, provided to junior enlisted Marines is "rules-based," with the goal of ensuring military discipline.

"Values-based"[15] ethics training seeks to improve the character of the individual Marine so that he is better equipped to deal with ambiguous situations often present in his profession. "Values-based" training, "…aims to improve the moral character or moral capacities of military personnel – to make them good people, not just well-behaved people."[16] Two Norwegian military ethicists write, "The *primary, fundamental* motive for teaching ethics in the military is neither to clean up the act of military operations under the gaze of the media, nor to make military operations more efficient. We teach ethics in the military because we want to *promote good and prevent evil*."[17] Ethics training for newly commissioned lieutenants at TBS is titled "Values-Based Training Continuum for Basic Officers" and lists five "horizontal themes" strictly in line with values-based training:

1. Exemplary Character,
2. Devoted to leading Marines,
3. Decide, Communicate in the fog of war,
4. A warfighter who embraces the Corps' warrior ethos, and
5. Mentally strong and physically tough.

Marine Corps on-line training for company grade officers instructs, "Ethical based leadership must permeate every decision made by a leader during both peace and war, even when others do not adhere to the same ethical values as the Marine Corps."[18] James Toner writes that instruction of this type, "…is concerned not so much with *doing things* as with *becoming someone*…"[19] and that someone is a Marine of exemplary moral character.

Ethical Values of a Military Service

Clearly the ethical values of military service are deeply rooted in law, custom and tradition. During initial commissioning and each promotion after, an officer in the Armed Forces of the United States of America is presented with a commission of his rank. That commission is predicated on the President of the United States believing in that officer's "patriotism, valor, fidelity and abilities." The Uniform Code of Military Justice, Article 133 (Conduct Unbecoming an Officer) states, "There are certain moral attributes common to the ideal officer…a lack of which is indicated by acts of dishonesty, unfair dealing, indecency, indecorum, lawlessness, injustice, or cruelty."[20] James Toner notes, "Armed service professionals are never relieved of their responsibility to set a good moral example. To expect anything less, especially of our officer corps…is to undermine the most noble element of military ethic."[21] It is particularly true that the "professionals" of the military, that is the officers, are expected to be of, and maintain, high moral character. Officers are expected to set the example for their enlisted Marines, and to lead by example. In a letter to all officers in command positions and their senior enlisted advisors, General Amos stresses, "We lead by example…I expect each of you to hold yourselves and your Marines to the highest standards…nothing else is acceptable."[22] Therefore, the senior officer of the service sets and maintains the ethics, or ethical framework, of his service.

General Amos, is, by his speeches, publications and remarks, acutely aware of this and actively manages this responsibility. As part of his initial planning guidance, General Amos directed the implementation of values-based training throughout the Marine Corps. His direction reads, "Implement values-based training that focuses on honor, courage, commitment, selflessness, and taking care of our fellow

Marines…emphasize to Marines the expectation of honorable service to our Nation and reinforce our core values so that Marines treat others with respect, dignity and compassion."[23] The program is undergoing implementation as of this writing, and its successes and shortcomings will be addressed in detail later in this paper. Additionally, as a result of several incidents in the past two years in which Marines behaved at a standard lower than expected, General Amos ordered a Marine Corps wide stand-down to focus on the ethics of the entire force, with emphasis on leadership and accountability and an appeal to the Marine Corps' core values of honor, courage and commitment.[24] The senior leaders of the Marine Corps set the ethics of the service, and those leaders expect the professionals of the service, the officers and career senior enlisted, to abide by and enforce that ethical framework. However, as will be demonstrated, most of the misconduct that has plagued the Marine Corps in recent years has involved junior enlisted Marines. The Marine Corps must develop and implement more effective methods of instilling the Marine Corps' ethic in junior enlisted Marines.

Ethics of the Marine Corps in Decline?

The physical and emotional rigor of eleven years of continuous combat operations, a high deployment tempo, and institutional shifts caused by legal and political changes have stressed the ethical bases of the Marine Corps. Although we lack a reliable quantitative measure of individual (much less organizational) ethics, or an objective standard to track changes in the ethical condition of an organization over time, this measurement deficiency cannot be taken as evidence that all is well within an organization. In light of several high-profile Marine Corps cases of ethical lapses leading to misconduct, and given the decade of stress experienced by the organization, it is the

duty of those entrusted with the care and future of the Marine Corps to assume that the ethics of the force have frayed.

The position of least institutional risk is to assume that there has been a decline in the ethics of the force. This is the position of the current Commandant, as demonstrated by his ordering an ethics stand-down and briefing of the Heritage Brief. In White Letter 1-12 titled, "Leadership and Conduct," the Commandant states, "…A number of recent, widely-publicized incidents have brought discredit on the Marine Corps and reverberated at the strategic level."[25] There have been numerous incidents in the past two years that point to an ethical fraying in the Marine Corps. In the Heritage Brief, the Commandant specifically addresses hazing, sexual assault, law of war violations and misconduct of Marine Security guards in foreign countries. Hazing, sexual assault and law of war violations will be addressed individually below, as well as the rising rate of suicide in the Marine Corps.

Hazing[26] has been a high profile issue in the Marine Corps for over fifty years, and has garnered particular attention in the past twenty years.[27] In 1997, video of young Marines being hazed during the awarding of parachutist's wings was aired on national news and caused a sea-change in the attitude of Marine senior leaders regarding hazing.[28] New orders, definitions and training soon followed, and incidents of hazing declined, but did not disappear. On April 3, 2012 Lance Corporal Harry Lew committed suicide with his service rifle after allegedly being hazed by several of his fellow Marines. Three Marines were court-martialed for the incident; a lance corporal and sergeant were found not guilty and a lance corporal pled guilty and was sentenced to rank reduction and a fine.[29]

Sexual assault is a major concern today in the Marine Corps, and has been discussed extensively amongst Marine leadership. Sexual assault is a catch-all term that encompasses misconduct including rape, aggravated sexual assault, aggravated sexual contact, wrongful sexual contact, and attempts to commit these crimes.[30] In 2011, there were 348 reported cases of sexual assault in the Marine Corps, and most experts agree the crime is severely underreported.[31] Preliminary reports of sexual assault in 2012 show an approximate 10 percent rise in reported cases.[32] This crime and the Marine Corps' response have faced intense scrutiny from society, media and Congress. The Secretary of Defense has forced responsibility for investigation and prosecution of sexual assault out of commander's hands and into those officers of higher rank, a move largely viewed as pleasing Congress but displaying a distrust of unit commanders.[33] Data from the Department of Defense Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military for 2010 and 2011 confirm that the vast majority of those accused of sexual assault, are young, male and of junior enlisted rank.[34] The DoD reports do not differentiate sexual assault by service, but instead examine the entire DoD as a whole. However, trends of the DoD report are also true of the Marine Corps.[35] In 2011, the latest data available, 48% those accused of sexual assault were E-1 to E-4, 25% were E-5 to E-9, 16% were unknown, and less than 5% were commissioned or warrant officers. The accused were overwhelmingly young, as well; 68% were under the age of 34. Victims were also young and of junior enlisted rank; 91% were under the age of 34 and 63% were E-1 to E-4.[36] Clearly the issue of sexual assault is one that must be tackled through proper training and education in the junior enlisted ranks.

In the Heritage Brief, the Commandant specifically addresses one law of war violation from Afghanistan, and alludes to several others from Iraq. In each instance, small units of Marines of junior rank were suspected of violations. In Iraq, two high-profile cases of law of war violations were Haditha and Hamdaniyah. In both cases, the accused were Marines were junior staff non-commissioned officers or lesser rank. Most recently, in Afghanistan, Marines were accused of urinating on the corpses of dead Taliban fighters. The Marines, either non-commissioned officers or junior staff non-commissioned officers, were punished via court-martial and non-judicial means for their actions. Interestingly, while others, including Secretary of State Clinton, were speaking of war crimes in this case, the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, which handled the investigation and prosecution of the case, was able to deduce that this behavior was a matter of failed ethics, “We hold Marines to a high standard of ethical behavior. The Marine Corps takes misconduct by Marines very seriously and is committed to holding accountable those who are responsible."[37]

The rising incidence of suicides amongst active duty Marines has also plagued the Marine Corps in recent years. Suicides rose steadily from 2003 to 2009, dipped in 2010 and 2011, and rose again in 2012. All of the Marines who committed suicide in 2012 were enlisted, and 41 of 46 (89%) were of the rank of Sergeant or below.[38] While the Marine Corps, with every other service, has instituted an array of programs to address the issue, none of these programs focus on the character of the Marine, and of building that character. Dr. Michael Evans of the Australian Defence College notes, “…little is done to provide… sufficient moral philosophy to protect their (military personnel) own hearts and minds against the rigors of contemporary warfare...”[39]

Another report states, “Military sociologists and clinicians worry that the suicide rate is just the leading indicator of a tide of mental and physical suffering…Prolonged exposure to combat triggers such intense emotions…that some psychiatrists at the VA have coined a new name for the malady: ‘moral injury.’”[40]

Undoubtedly, there are several factors at fault for this ethical decline. First, the force has been in constant conflict since late 2001. Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan is now this nation’s longest war, and Operation Iraqi Freedom lasted for eight years, twice as long as World War II. The effects of prolonged conflict on a democracy and her armed forces are not fully understood, but it is widely agreed that erosion of the ethical fabric of the force will result. Thucydides writes that after five years of the Peloponnesian War, “…war takes away the easy supply of daily wants and so proves a rough master that brings most men’s characters to a level with their fortunes.”[41] Don Snider, a senior fellow at West Point’s Center for the Army Profession and Ethic opines, “War…creates a culture where cutting corners ethically becomes the norm.”[42] During the Heritage Brief, General Amos speaks of ten years of continual combat; the unspoken implication is that during that amount of time misconduct will occur. The common military attitude of “can-do” is easily morphed into an attitude of “the ends justify the means” during extended combat operations.

Another key factor is the moral quality of the force recruited to serve in the armed forces, including the Marine Corps. Marine values of honor, courage and commitment are not as widespread in American society as they once were, and conforming to the military ethic for young men and women may be more difficult than in the past. The Josephson Institute for Ethics, a private nonprofit research institute, conducts annual

surveys of nearly 23,000 high school students nation-wide. The newest survey indicates that over 75% of these students have lied to a parent about something significant, over half have cheated on a school exam, and 20% had stolen an item from a store.[43] This population, from which our enlisted Marines are recruited, requires training in order to comply with the military ethic. A Marine Major notes, “Problems arise when one’s morals do not align with the ethics of the organization.”[44] However, achieving that alignment is difficult.

Attitude changes during a decade of war and the decline of recruits’ moral quality lead to individual ethical lapses that may be enabled or compounded by institutional tensions within the Marine Corps. The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have not only endured for over a decade, they have also exposed Marines to a myriad of issues involved in counterinsurgency and wide-area security. Unlike many prior conflicts, the enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan is amorphous, ever-present, and population-centric. Previously mentioned moral lapses in these theaters resulted partly from an overwhelming frustration concerning identification and ability to engage the enemy. Only a man of strong character is able to consistently assimilate this frustration and not lash out at the civilian populous.

In garrison, many recent changes due an evolving social and political climate contribute to institutional ethical tension. Even in the absence of conflict, recruiters may feel challenged to filling their quotas and simultaneously find recruits who meet Marine Corps standards in a population of adolescents that is diverging from Marine Corps values in most respects. At the height of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Marine Corps added nearly 22,000 Marines to its ranks. Recruiters were under

enormous pressure to meet increased quotas of recruits. In wartime, the Marines face unique recruiting challenges, as the Marine Corps has the highest percentage of enlisted personnel who fill combat roles. Potential Marines knew what they were going to do: to fight a continuing conflict on morally conflicted battlefields. Furthermore, in an era of declining fiscal resources, there is constant pressure to maintain unit readiness levels. Commanders and their staffs navigate the ethical shoals of readiness reporting, in which higher headquarters demands no decrease in combat readiness rates while at the same time cutting training opportunities due to cost constraints. Finally, while pursuing a whole-of-US-military campaign of prevention and prosecution of sexual assault, the Department of Defense recently lifted all gender restrictions in ground combat units. The future introduction of females into infantry, engineer and perhaps special operations units introduces more institutional tensions. While leaders may be unable to affect the issues that lead to institutional ethical tension, for example the type of war fought or public law passed by Congress, they must be aware of the tension and the opportunities for ethical decline that may result.

Current Ethics Instruction

Ethics are taught to members of the armed forces in two ways; rules-based and values-based. Rules-based ethics tends to focus on ensuring that the educated abide by the laws and regulations of the organization in order to reduce incidents of misconduct. Jessica Wolfendale of the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at the University of Melbourne states, “Under the functional [rules-based] view, the end of teaching military ethics is the promotion or enhancement of military efficiency.”[45] Values-based ethics seeks to sharpen the morals of the educated in order to arm them with the character required to make correct decisions in ambiguous situations. Jessica

Wolfendale further explains, “The aspirational [values-based] view does not ignore behavior…Instead, the aim is…to cultivate good behavior through cultivation of good moral character. But the justification for cultivating good moral character…is taken to be a morally desirable end in and of itself.”[46]

A study of the ethics programs taught at the United States Naval Academy, TBS, and Marine Corps Recruiting Depot (MCRD) Parris Island show significant similarities, but also striking differences. Don Carrick of the Institute of Applied Ethics at the University of Hull notes, “There seems to be little doubt that current ethics programmes in the military are still overwhelmingly biased towards the production of good *officers*.”[47] This is entirely true in the Marine Corps. The ethics programs taught to officers and officer candidates is values-based, broader, more encompassing, and stresses the importance of character development. The ethics program taught to recruits at Parris Island is rules-based, much more narrow, and concentrated on determination of conduct and misconduct.

Ethics training at the USNA in Annapolis, MD, which provides approximately 20% of Marine officers, and TBS in Quantico, VA, an introductory course for all Marine officers, is comprehensive, values-based and concentrates on strengthening the character of the individual. The mission of USNA is, “To prepare midshipmen *morally*, mentally and physically to become officers in the Naval Service.”[48] Midshipmen programs at the Stockdale Center for ethical leadership concentrate on seven attributes, the first of which is to create, “Selfless leaders who value diversity and create an ethical command climate through their example of personal integrity and moral courage.”[49] None of the seven attributes contain language regarding conduct; it is assumed that a

midshipman of high morals will conduct himself in a proper and honorable manner. The ethics curriculum at TBS also concentrates on values-based ethics training through five horizontal "themes" which have been previously mentioned. As with the Naval Academy attributes, the first theme TBS is to develop "A man or woman of exemplary character."[50] Also in line with the Naval Academy, none of the attributes from TBS mentions conduct. TBS ethics training continually reinforces Marine core values of honor, courage and commitment, and teaches ethics through a framework of decision-making, case studies, and examples of leaders with high moral character. Lieutenants are taught in small groups and are expected to think their way through fictionalized ethical dilemmas, as well as those faced by officers in the past. Major Steven Clifton, ethics and combat stress instructor at TBS explained, "We try to teach ethics through case method and experiential methods to officers."[51] Another observer notes of the training and its goals, "Moral development is a growth process by which one learns to consider others when making decisions that are evaluated morally or ethically and hinges on conducting one's self in a morally or ethically praiseworthy manner."[52] The end result of this training should be an officer of outstanding moral character who continually assesses situations using a developed ethical framework; a Marine who has, "…a solid foundation in the Core Values [in order] to rely on them when faced with an ethical dilemma."[53]

Ethics training for enlisted Marines at MCRD is taught to all recruits, using formal educational materials (articles, case studies, etc.). While it emphasizes the core values of the Marine Corps, this training should not be construed as "values-based" ethics training. For example, the goal of "Introduction to Ethics" is "Without the aid of reference define 'Ethics' to maintain exemplary virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination."[54]

There is no mention of improving the character of the recruit or making him a more moral person. Another example is illustrated in the "Instructor Prep Guide" to the ethics class which states the end state of the training is, "…for every Recruit to apply our core values in maintaining professional conduct at all times."[55] A general observation by Jessica Wolfendale regarding ethics training for enlisted rings true for the Marine Corps, "…while enlisted personnel are also exposed to highly moralized language…it appears that they are generally only expected to memorize their service's list of values, the laws of war…and the different rules of engagement relevant to their particular deployments." She continues, "The emphasis in their [enlisted] training is on rule-following, not on developing good moral character or high-level reasoning skills, an approach that is consistent with the functional view."[56]

Rules-based ethics training is appropriate for enlisted Marines, and training in any military organization should emphasize conduct. However, when ethics training only addresses conduct (encouraging positive conduct, negating misconduct), the Marine Corps misses an opportunity to arm Marines with more meaningful knowledge. Institutionally, the Marine Corps' goal is to move to values-based training across all ranks, but the reasons for this must be clear to all. The reason should not be, as stated in the Commandant's Planning Guidance, to "…markedly reduce incidents of illegal / immoral / indecent acts among Marines, both within and outside of our Corps."[57] The reason should be to improve the character of each Marine, regardless of rank, and understand that a more moral Marine will, of necessity, behave in concert with the ethical values of the Marine Corps due to his own virtue. Michael Evans, writing of the need for more values-based ethics states, "…While modern ethical codes emphasize

institutional rules of behavior, moral philosophy puts in the foreground the development of personal character and the reconciliation of the individual to the social environment in which he or she operates. Ethics need, therefore, to be complemented by a stronger focus on philosophy that permits the professional military to become fully a self-conscious moral community committed to maintaining traditions essential to the integrity of its people and the discharge of its responsibilities.[58]

Improvements

Changes in the education and training of ethics in the Marine Corps must be made in order to improve the ethical base of the force, decrease misconduct, and prepare Marines for the emotional and spiritual toil of combat. Edgar Schein, in his book *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, describes three levels of institutional culture—from the observable elements at the "surface" of the culture, to the unobservable elements at its foundation. Crucially, Schein offers insight as to how leaders can shape culture to cause institutional change.[59]

"Artifacts" are the surface level of institutional culture. Schein explains that artifacts are created by “primary embedding mechanisms” and by “secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms.”[60] They include, “Visible and feelable structures and processes and observed behavior.”[61] One level below the artifacts are “norms and values” of the organization that include, “Ideals, goals, values, aspirations and ideologies.”[62] Finally, at the base of the culture are “assumptions.” Assumptions are “Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values that determine behavior, perception, thought and feeling.”[63] Schein's great insight is that leaders cannot directly affect the assumptions of an organization; they are not observable and only subject to indirect change. Even norms and values are difficult to manipulate. Leaders use embedding and

reinforcing mechanisms to shape norms and values, and ultimately supersede old assumptions about what "works" in an organization. There are six different primary embedding mechanisms, all of which deal with the manner in which the leader controls, models, and reacts to his organization. There are also six different secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms, also of which deal with organizational structures, design, rituals and events.

For example, one of the Marine Corps' underlying assumptions is that the combat effectiveness of the Marine Corps is predicated on every Marine putting the Corps ahead of himself and maintaining his identity as a Marine above self or above any occupation specialty identification (armor, artillery, aviation). Artifacts and values that reinforce this assumption range from the manner in which Marines wear their uniforms to traditional squad bays for enlisted personnel. Marines do not wear unit insignia on their uniforms, and all Marines wear utilities, even aviators when not engaged in flight operations. Marine officers wear smaller collar rank than any other service, and do not wear rank on their headgear, as does every other service. Marine aviators, when in flight suits, do not wear rank on their shoulders. Until the mid-1990s Marines did not wear name patches on their uniforms, and there was significant grumbling amongst Marines when name patches were instituted. Traditional Marine enlisted barracks consisted of open squad bays and communal heads, which are still retained at recruit depots and officer candidate school. However, this assumption has come in conflict during the past two decades with increasing societal demands for privacy, and two-man barracks rooms have been installed at most bases.

Another example of an assumption in the Marine Corps is the ever-present concern that the existence of the Marine Corps is at risk. This has only been reinforced during the present fiscal turmoil. Threatened with extinction after World War II, the Marine Corps succeeded in gaining legal recognition in the National Security Act of 1947.[64] Since that time, however, a pervasive belief exists among all Marines that the Corps is at risk. As Schein states, “Basic assumptions…have become so taken for granted that you find little variation within a…unit.”[65] Artifacts and values such as add campaigns proclaiming the Marine Corps as “First to Fight” and “America’s 911 Force,” as well as constant messaging regarding the cost-effectiveness of the Marine Corps flow from this assumption. For sixty-five years this assumption and its implementing artifacts and values have been deemed successful by the Marine Corps and in doing so it has become a large part of Marine culture.

While the preceding two examples are tangentially relevant to ethical considerations, a final, core assumption of the Marine Corps creates one of the organization's greatest challenges in ethical self-governance. Unique among the armed forces of the United States, the Marine Corps is the youngest service and the service with the highest turnover rate for enlisted personnel. Forty-four percent of all Marines are in the ranks of E-1 to E-3, as compared to 24% in the Army, and the Marines must recruit and train fully 16% of their force every year, as compared to 12% for the Army.[66] This "wide pyramid" structure is an artifact of a core value of the organization: the Marines are built for combat. The assumption that supports this value is that an effective war fighting organization needs a large number of well-trained but low-ranking personnel to do the difficult and deadly work of combat. Given limited resources, the

Marines assume that it is more effective to invest those resources in young warfighters than in more senior personnel, specialists, and so on. The youthfulness of many Marines makes them more susceptible to many ethical and criminal failures—for example, it is well established that young men aged 18-25 are more likely to engage in risky behaviors than are older men. Peer pressure, both good and bad, significantly influences behavior, and that susceptibility may be exploited for good or ill.

While the young age and high turnover rate of junior Marines poses many challenges, it also presents many opportunities. Most Marines are young, impressionable, and their character is not beyond the point of perfecting through proper education. Senior non-commissioned officers, Corporals or Sergeants, would be placed through intense ethical training, either at professional military education (PME) schools or at TBS, and used as role models for their fellow Marines in some commands. Another way to exploit peer pressure is the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP). Currently, MCMAP is charged with developing "ethical warriors" during martial arts training, usually through "stories with a strong emotional impact that inspire moral behavior."[67] Many MCMAP instructors are senior noncommissioned officers (SNCOs) or junior SNCOs, and the process is fundamentally sound, but the "moral tale" often does not receive the focus it deserves; it is usually told after completion of training or curtailed. MCMAP training, which is continuous throughout a Marines' career, should reemphasize character development and moral virtue.

The first step in problem solving is to simply admit that there is a problem, and the Marine Corps has accomplished this. In doing so, it has achieved the first primary embedding mechanism of "What leaders pay attention to, measure and control on a

regular basis."[68] The Commandant has been very forthright in his statements regarding the misconduct of several Marines, and has put forth several proposals in an attempt to dissuade further misconduct. Many of these proposals are sound. The Heritage brief demonstrates that the Commandant understands and eagerly accepts his role as the ethical leader and role model for the entire Marine Corps. He, in turn, expects his officers and senior enlisted personnel to enforce ethical standards and to set the example to junior enlisted by demonstrating ethical leadership and character.

The Commandant has also called for "values-based" training throughout the Marine Corps. This training, according to the planning guidance, should occur throughout a Marine's career and in widely-dispersed locations, not just in formal PME schools, "This training will be added to programs of instruction at all formal schools, as well as integrated within a wide range of training evolutions such as Enhanced Mohave Viper."[69] This values-based training, in theory, is exactly what the Marine Corps needs to improve its ethical standing, and is in-line with Schein's primary embedding mechanisms. However, as demonstrated above, this training is often abbreviated, rules-based, and too often emphasizes misconduct over character building.

During that past decade, "When war crimes occur…it is usually not the senior officers but the lower ranks who commit the atrocities."[70] Junior enlisted Marines are most at risk to commit misconduct, not only in combat, but in garrison as well. They must be the target of an intense campaign of values-based ethics education. Relying on the moral example of their officers is no longer sufficient, as one author notes, "The assumption that enlisted personnel may simply follow the example of their leaders threatens to treat [them]…as little more than automatons…rather than…as autonomous

moral agents who will have to take responsibility for their actions and decision-making."[71] Abiding by nuanced rules of engagement on an increasingly complex battlefield, combined with the potential for instant global media communication of wrong-doings, every Marine, regardless of rank, must be armed with the moral capacity and ethical framework to think through complex situations and arrive at the morally correct solution. One author writes about the current nature of warfare, "The soldier of the future is likely to be not only on occasion soldier, policeman, 'hearts and minds' ambassador or general diplomat, but sometimes all of them alternately on a single occasion, in quick and confusing succession."[72] In order to sufficiently arm these young men to cope with this complex environment, it is crucial that ethically-sound decisions become the norm. In order to ensure they do become the norm, every Marine must work on building his character in accordance with the military ethic, a concept known as habitus. A researcher explains, "…very important in the idea of virtue ethics is the concept of habitus, or a stable moral disposition…*habitus* means a pattern of reflection, reasoning and decision – a state of character."[73]

In order to build the character of junior Marines, ethics education must move beyond lectures consisting of flow charts and learning objectives that ultimately emphasize rules, regulations and the diminishment of misconduct and toward the Commandant's vision of continuous ethical education with an emphasis on character-building. "The very nature of the profession of arms – which entails killing or preparing to kill, destruction or preparation for wreaking destruction – involves soldiers in…ethical anguish…'logic trees,' moral checklists, ethical flow charts – none of these things can help soldiers resolve some of the most pressing problems they confront."[74] Ethics

instruction for junior Marines needs to follow the model of the instruction given at TBS which emphasizes values, moral character and decision-making in morally ambiguous situations. Case studies should be widely used, and role models, especially enlisted role models, who faced moral dilemmas and ethical challenges must be presented, studied and, if possible, available for live interactive sessions. Education should take place not only at boot camp, but also at all resident PME courses, during non-resident PME, and during Marine Corps exercises and evaluations. Extensive, continuing, case-study based training is one of Schein's primary embedding mechanism, and a ready was to alter organizational norms and values.

Each year, every Marine, regardless of rank, is required to complete a myriad of annual training on topics as diverse as nutrition, force protection, substance abuse and suicide awareness. Interestingly, there is also a mandatory annual "ethics" course which must be completed, but it largely deals with business and legal ethics including gift receipt and influence from government contractors. Much of this training is computer based, rote, mindless and extremely unpopular for all ranks. This training, with the exception of force protection and security, would be much better served as a part of continuing quarterly values-based ethics training. Altering this training would, in Schein's lexicon, create new organizational artifacts that demonstrate the importance of ethics in the Marine Corps. Marines of moral character, with virtue reinforced by their peers, and constantly reminded of ethical behavior and virtuous leadership, stand a much better chance of making the correct decision when faced with the temptation of misconduct than does a Marine that completed his one hour "do not drink and drive" computer-based training.

While this program has no guarantee of success, the present course is simply not sustainable. Further high profile cases of misconduct, and continued rampant rates of sexual assault, substance abuse and suicide will only increase condemnation and scrutiny from the public and Congress. The leaders of the Marine Corps must continue to shape its norms and values, create embedding mechanisms to develop new assumptions, and reinforcing mechanisms to emphasize healthy, existing assumptions. As with any social or educational experiment, results may be slow to unveil, setbacks will occur, and it will be difficult to quantitatively measure results.

More than any one "bright idea," the Marine Corps should embrace a philosophy of true experimentation in the organization as it seeks to improve the ethical condition of the Corps. "True experimentation" means test programs with control and treatment groups. If an idea has merit, test it on a subgroup of the organization and evaluate the results against groups that did not receive the "treatment." As Jim Manzi writes, "…most new ideas fail to show improvement when they are measured rigorously, and when they do, the improvements tend to be small."[75] However, when an organization implements a change on a limited scale and evaluates that change against an untreated group, it has a true opportunity to learn.

This paper advocates a systematic, culture-based approach to building a more ethically sound Corps. Perhaps the most leverage for accomplishing this lies in turning what many view as an ethical liability into a strength. The Marine Corps' youth creates challenges, but it also creates opportunities. Leadership should create embedding mechanisms and reinforcing mechanisms that emphasize the responsibility of Marines for *each other's* behavior. These may include changes to the physical space of the

organization (a return to open barracks, for example), emphasis on collective punishment (still used in basic training but less emphasized afterwards) and collective rewards, buddy or team systems for leave, and so on. Many may perceive such efforts as infringing on the liberties of junior personnel, yet perhaps such infringements are more representative of the core assumptions mentioned above: the Marine Corps' greatness stems from the sacrifice of individual Marines for a greater good. Wherever a leader finds practices in the organization that contradict this, changes must be made.

Individual actions may still stymie the best system of ethics training and organizational change. There is, however, nothing to lose by emphasizing values-based ethics to all Marines, while there is much to be gained. James Toner, professor of military ethics at the U. S. Air Force Air War College observes, “It is past time to teach all soldiers that they…must bear the burden of deciding the right and of choosing the true; it is past time to teach all soldiers that the ethics of simple answers and the morals of school solutions frequently result in absence of thought and poverty of action…”[76]

Conclusion

The ethical fabric of the Marine Corps has decayed in the past decade due to ongoing conflict, societal change, institutional tension, and a decline in the moral quality of our Marine recruits. That decline has been manifested in high rates of misconduct including law of war violations, sexual assault, hazing and suicide. The Marine Corps has recognized this decline, and has taken firm action to arrest it by attempting to alter those issues within its control. In an effort to affect institutional change, the Commandant has addressed all officers and senior staff NCOs on the topic of misconduct, and has personally addressed the ethics of the Corps. The Commandant has initiated values-based training for all Marines, but implementation is spotty and

imperfect. While the Marine Corps currently does a good job of striving to perfect the character of officers through continuous values-based ethical training, that same values-based training is often lacking for junior enlisted Marines. Junior enlisted Marines are those most at risk of misconduct and suicide, and must be the target of renewed ethics training which targets character, moral development and the virtue of man. Only through this type of ethics training will the true moral and mental potential of the entire Marine Corps be achieved.

Endnotes

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[7] "TBS Ethics Overview," "Issues of Battlefield Ethics and Leadership" and "Issues of Garrison Ethics and Leadership" as well as "EWS Leadership and Ethics". The United States Naval Academy provides approximately 20% of the officers for the United States Marine Corps. Every Marine officer attends The Basic School prior to Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) specific training. Recruit training for every enlisted Marine occurs at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, SC and Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, CA. All interaction was with MCRD Parris Island, but both recruit depots teach from the same materials.

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